

5882



A N
E S S A Y

On the MEANS of
Discharging the Public Debt.



[Price One Shilling and Sixpence.]

50059

[Price One Shilling and Sixpence]

Tuoes V. H.

A N
E S S A Y

On the MEANS of
Discharging the Public Debt;

IN WHICH
The REASONS for instituting a
NATIONAL BANK, and disposing of
the FOREST-LANDS, are more fully
considered.

WITH A
METHOD proposed of raising MONEY
to answer the Expences of any future War,
without creating new Funds.

By the AUTHOR of the
P R O P O S A L
For establishing a NATIONAL BANK.

*Si quid novisti rectius istis
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.* HOR.

L O N D O N:
Printed for T. PAYNE, at the Mew's Gate.
M D C C L X I I I.

MEMPHIS

Director of the Public Dept.

11 03 14 14 14

THE H. E. A. S. O. S. FOR



THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE



berühmte

A H T I W

METHOD proposed of raising Money

to allow the Expenses of any kind.

with a rising eye, hands.

THE A. L. H. O. R. of the

0-6040

P R E F A C E.

AMONGST the various reasons assigned for the low state of our funds, the most obvious seem to be the least attended to. The vast increase of our national debt must necessarily occasion a great increase of stock at market; and every novice in trade knows, that when a market is overstocked with any commodity, the price sinks accordingly. If the necessity of individuals, or the common occasions of selling stock are equal, there must be double the quantity at market when 140 millions are in circulation, that there was when we owed but 70 millions; and unless there be a proportionably greater quantity of money in the kingdom to
increase

increase the demand, the price must consequently decline.

When one considers the prodigious increase of our national debt within a few years, and the spirit of gaming it has universally diffused;—the quantity of foreign money that has been placed in our funds when at a very low price, and how much of it has been sold out on their sudden rise towards the conclusion of the war, by which the nation has absolutely lost above 20 *per cent.*—the extraordinary number of adventurers in this kingdom who have engaged deeply, in expectation of immense profit on a peace;—how many of these have stretched their credit to the utmost on speculation, and are obliged to sell at any price that can be had. When these combined reasons are considered, the low state of our funds cannot be wondered at.

Whoever

P R E F A C E. vii

Whoever examines the causes of the number of bankruptcies which have happened of late to our merchants, will find, that most of them have proceeded from trafficking in Change-alley, where thousands have been transacted, for every hundred on the Royal Exchange. This baneful traffick, the offspring of public debt, has been nourished by the distresses of the nation ; and as a further increase of public debt and stock-jobbing may be fatal to our credit and commerce, the following measures are proposed, as a remedy for such growing evils ; and although they deviate greatly from a system of expedients long pursued, it is to be hoped they will not be absolutely condemned on that account ; for when a disease has advanced beyond the reach of palliatives, it, certainly, requires the application

application of more powerful medicines.

The favourable reception the first part of this essay met with from the public, has encouraged the Author to carry his thoughts farther; leaving it to such of his readers, as have turned their thoughts this way, to make such improvements as may occur to them.

A N

A N
E S S A Y

On the M E A N S of
Discharging the Public Debt.

THE Author of the History of the Taxes of England, after enumerating the several sums borrowed on public credit during the reigns of King William and Queen Anne, concludes with saying, " We need not be amazed at the wealth since " that time amassed by *Jews, Dutch, Usurers, and Stockjobbers*, or at the spirit of " gaming that has so universally prevailed; " for Stockjobbing is a kind of gaming, in " which the Ministers and Brokers may be " reckoned the box-keepers. Therefore we " can hardly expect *that any such phænomenon* " will ever appear, as *a minister, or ministerial government sincerely inclined to put an* " *end to this system*, or introduce such *Oecono-*

B

" my

“ *my as may prevent the nation being ever obliged to borrow money for the public service.* “ This,” he says, “ can now be nothing but *the effect of necessity*, or the management of *a wise, resolute, and truly British Sovereign.*”

The nation was at that time between forty and fifty millions in debt; and the justness of this author's reflection appears from the conduct of every succeeding minister, who, by pursuing the like measures, has at last loaded us with 140 millions: So that after a series of amazing success in the late war, we found ourselves reduced to the necessity of entering into terms of peace, allowed to be inadequate to our successes, and, I fear, but too truly adequate to our circumstances.

Let us examine history, we shall find there never was a time since there has been such a thing as government in this kingdom, when a *wise, upright, and steady administration* was so necessary as at the present juncture. Our strength hath been impaired by *Quacks in politics*——we want a physician.——Circumstances favour us in a great degree by having a *British Sovereign on the throne*; who, we are sure, will concur in all measures that tend to the ease and comfort of his people.

And

And however extraordinary the phænomenon, a minister or ministerial government sincerely inclined to put an end to the system of borrowing, might have been at a time we owed but 40 or 50 millions, I am inclined to think the burthen is now so very heavy and unwieldy, that future ministers must be under the necessity of easing their country of part of the load.

Our national debt has been so extravagantly increased during the late war, beyond what it was ever imagined this nation was able to support, that any proposal for discharging it is treated by many as a chimerical project. Notwithstanding which, as I am satisfied we are still blest with sufficient resources for the purpose, I shall venture to point out the means, by which, I imagine, so desirable an end may be attained.

It often happens, that measures tending greatly to the benefit of the public, are equally repugnant to the views or interests of particular persons, whose influence has frequently been too powerful for the public welfare. But we may still hope, however, that a *wise and steady administration* will pay no regard to the interest of individuals, or any particular body of

men, when placed in opposition to the general advantage of the nation.

The public credit of this kingdom has been so constantly made use of in borrowing money to support the extraordinary expences of every war we have been engaged in for these seventy years past, that were it not for the soundness of our constitution it must have long since betrayed us into absolute ruin. We borrowed 10 millions on it in K. William's war;—this was increased to near 50 in Q. Anne's wars;—in the next to 80;—and in the last war we have stretched it to 140 millions, or upwards!

For this 140 millions, the nation, in reality, never received above 100; and one fourth of that has been squandered in *jobbs* and *contracts*. How much farther our credit can bear being strained in this manner, without breaking, is more than any but *Jews*, *Stock-jobbers*, and *Contractors* will pretend to determine; and who that has any regard to his country would venture to try the experiment? At best, it is verging on a precipice, and one step further in the same road may become irretrievable. Like a spendthrift heir to a large estate in the hands of rapacious
 6 usurers,

usurers, we have given the most extravagant premiums, paid the highest interest, and mortgaged even the equity of redemption of a considerable part of the revenue for a number of years to come.

It is full time, therefore, that this credit, which arises entirely from the public, should be employed to general advantage; and no longer made use of to fill the purses of a set of men, who under pretence of supporting, have been constantly sapping its foundation; and, like suckers at the root of a tall tree, have been continually drawing the nourishment from it. Upon a presumption, I say, that such, whether distinguished by the names of *Directors of Companies, Jobbers, Monopolizers, Undertakers for Loans, &c. &c.* will not have sufficient influence to hinder the execution of any scheme, by which our National Credit may be employed to the advantage of the public; the following plan of a NATIONAL BANK is proposed, with other measures, for the discharge of our heavy load of debt, and establishing a sufficient fund for defraying the expences of any future war without borrowing.

P L A N

P L A N
O F A

National Parliamentary Bank.

THAT this Bank shall issue out notes payable to bearer, or order, on demand, for any sum not less than 100 *l.* that shall be deposited there.

That all notes for 100 *l.* and upwards, for every 50 *l.* over and above 100 *l.* shall entitle the bearer to receive the same on demand, with interest at the rate of two *per cent.* if it has remained one year from the date ; and the same rate of interest for every six months over and above one year that such note shall remain unpaid. But that no interest shall be allowed on any note, for any time less than one year from the date ; nor for any fraction of time less than six months afterwards ; nor for any fraction of money less than 50 *l.* over and above 100 *l.*

That the money arising from the public revenue be placed from time to time in this Bank, as at present into the Exchequer ;
and

and that all officers of the revenue be obliged to receive these notes as cash in all payments.

That the Lords Commissioners of his Majesty's Treasury shall have power to draw, or issue orders to this Bank for the payment of money to the same amount, and for the same purposes they now do to the Exchequer; with a further power also of drawing for any sum not exceeding 500,000 *l.* more than the receipt on account of the public revenue may have brought into the Bank at the time.

That the present officers of the Exchequer, whose offices shall cease by the establishment of this Bank, be employed in such offices in it as may be deemed proper, with salaries equal to what they enjoy at present, and all the other profits of their employments; and that such other officers as may be affected in the profits of their employments, be allowed salaries equal to the full amount of what they lose by this establishment. But that all future officers of the Bank be appointed by the Directors, at such salaries as they shall think proper.

That the current business of this Bank be under the direction of thirty-six gentlemen of estates

estates of inheritance in land, each to the amount of 1000 *l. per ann.* at the least, in possession ; to be answerable for his conduct, and unalienable during his continuance in the direction.

That twenty-four of these be appointed the first year by lot, and twelve of these twenty-four to be continued in the same manner the next year, to whom the twelve excluded by lot the first year, are to be added, and every year after, twelve Directors changed by rotation, so that twenty-four be constantly in the direction ; each of whom to be allowed a salary of *l.* proportioned in some measure to the constancy of his attendance ; with a proper drawback for non-attendance, otherwise the office will soon become a sine-cure.

That all the accounts and other transactions of the Bank be laid annually before the House of Commons ; the accounts relating to the revenue, to be laid separately by the Directors of the Bank, and also by the proper officers as at present.

That a particular Committee be appointed every session for the inspection and examination of these accounts ; to form orders and resolutions for the Bank, and report the same

to

to the House; to which Committee every member may resort, and give his vote.

As the establishment of a national Bank may seem repugnant to the privileges already granted to the Bank of England, it may be proper to examine and explain these privileges.

By an Act of William the Third, no other Bank, Corporation, Society, &c. or Constitution in the nature of a Bank, shall be allowed by Act of Parliament during the continuance of the Bank of England; which privilege was granted on account of its advancing 1,200,000 *l.* to the government to carry on the war against France. And it is particularly specified, that upon twelve months notice after the year 1719, repayment being made of that and other sums due from the government; in such case, *and not till then*, the Corporation, by this and the former Act, is absolutely to cease and determine.

By an Act of the 5th of Queen Anne, the Bank was also to continue until the Exchequer bills then issued for 1,500,000 *l.* shall be repaid. By an Act of the 6th of Queen Anne, no more than six persons were to be united in partnership as Bankers during its continuance; and by subsequent Acts these privi-

leges were continued to 1732, afterwards to the year 1742, and by an Act of King George II. to the 1st of August 1764.

These exclusive privileges appear to have been granted on account of several sums advanced to the government from time to time, the whole of which at present amounts to 11,686,800 *l.*; and as it is expressly declared, that on repayment of the several sums due from the government, and twelve months notice after the 1st of August 1764, the Corporation is to cease absolutely, the public will then undoubtedly be at full liberty to avail itself of its credit, by the institution of a national Bank.

There is no kingdom in Europe so proper for the establishment of a general Bank as this. Its constitution is better adapted to the preservation of property than any other; its situation, as an island, secures it from sudden incursions, consequently from plunder and contributions; and its naval power is sufficient to protect it from any danger of invasion.

The public credit of this nation has been so inviolably maintained, that the faith of Parliament, to make good all sums deposited in this Bank, may be relied on with the greatest safety; yet it is proposed that the Sink-
ing

ing Fund, amounting to two millions *per ann.* shall be applied to this purpose ; which is such a security as no other kingdom can give. This, with the profit of two *per cent.* for money payable on demand, which probably no other nation could find its account in giving, will, to all appearance, be sufficient inducements to foreigners, as well as natives, to prefer this Bank to any other.

The money lodged there, above what may be deemed necessary for the circulation of its notes, may be applied to the payment of part of the national debt ; by which there will be a saving to the public of one *per cent.* the difference between the interest now paid, and that to be paid by this Bank. But however advantageous such an institution may appear at first view, it is but reasonable, that a plan so different from any thing of the kind established here, should undergo a strict examination, and be thoroughly approved by the public, before it can claim any pretence to being carried into execution ; I shall therefore endeavour to shew how far it appears practicable, and beneficial to the several interests of this nation.

The feasibility of establishing a national parliamentary Bank on the terms proposed,

depends on a presumption that a sufficiency of cash will be deposited there to answer the intended purpose of converting the redeemable part of our debt into Bank notes payable on demand. How far this presumption may be deemed reasonable, is the first point to be considered.

The specie of this kingdom has been formerly estimated, by Sir William Petty and others, at 16 millions; whether it be more or less at present is not easy to determine; but whatever the quantity may really be, there is certainly a very considerable part of it lodged in the Bank of England; and as that Company is not allowed to lend money on land-security, it must be presumed the specie, bullion, and discounted bills of exchange it is possessed of, with the sums due from the government, will be sufficient to discharge all its notes in circulation.

When this specie, and bullion converted into specie, is returned to the public, it seems reasonable to conclude that the whole, or the greatest part of it, will be deposited in the national Bank; where the advantage is equal as to payment on demand; superior in point of profit, on account of the interest of two
per

per cent.; and the security out of comparison greater than that of any other Bank.

Five or six millions deposited in this Bank will be sufficient, with the public revenue amounting to eight or nine millions *per ann.* circulating there, to pay off from one to five millions of the national debt at a time; and it can hardly be doubted but this money, or the greatest part of it, will soon be returned again, in whatever manner it may be intended to dispose of it afterwards: For if it is let to remain but for a month, or even a less time, before a proper opportunity can be found, it will be of somewhat more value than the money; and the party who is to receive it, will certainly chuse to take it in that shape. So that, as soon as returned, it may safely be applied in the same manner. One or two millions remaining in Bank, being sufficient, with the current revenue, to answer all demands that may be reasonably expected.

As this Bank will not issue notes for any sum less than 100 *l.* and that no interest is to arise from thence in less than a year in the first instance, and every six months afterwards, the money placed there will, most probably, be with intent to let it remain a considerable

considerable time ; and will consequently leave the money intended for circulation within the year, and also the cash required by merchants to answer the current demands of trade, with the whole business of discounting to the private bankers ; who will find also a benefit by making lodgments in this Bank, which will be as ready money if wanted, and produce an interest of two *per cent.* if not wanted.

When the extraordinary advantage of receiving such interest, and the principal on demand, is considered, it can hardly be doubted but five or six millions, at the least, will be placed in this Bank, on the dissolution of the Bank of England ; and with this sum, or even less, fourteen or fifteen millions of our debt might be converted into Bank-notes in one year ; by the same money being returned to the Bank, as it certainly would be, into whatever hands it might fall ; and might still be safely applied in the same manner, whilst any part of our redeemable debt remained unpaid.

By this means the public will save one *per cent.* which on 100 millions of our debt amounts to one million *per ann.* This added to the Sinking Fund, and applied faithfully with

with its increase on account of the interest of such part of the national debt as may be absolutely discharged each year, will in a short time reduce its overgrown bulk to a moderate size, and also become a certain means of abolishing many of our most burthenfome taxes on the necessaries of life ; which is undoubtedly a matter of the highest importance to the commercial and landed interests of this kingdom.

It may be objected, perhaps, that the lowness of the interest will oblige many people to employ their money in trade, or lend it on some other security that may bring in greater profit. This may possibly be the case with many, and the part thrown into trade will become a public benefit ; for when the reputable tradesman can borrow money upon easy terms, he will increase his stock, and set a greater number of hands to work ; but whatever number of hands the money so employed may pass through, it will, sooner or later, find its way to this Bank : For the industrious man never lets money lie dead, when a profit, be it ever so small, can be made of it without risque.

Persons out of trade who have been used to keep their own cash, will be glad to lodge
it

it where they can have as much command of it as if in their own possession, and receive a profit by it at the same time. Foreigners also, who can find no such safe recevoir in their own country, will most probably remit their money to a Bank established on so solid a foundation; from whence they may draw it when they think proper, and in the mean time be paid a reasonable interest for it.

As it is not proposed that this Bank shall discount bills of exchange, or merchants notes, which is a very large and profitable branch to the Bank of England, it will be proper to consider how far our trade may be affected in that point.

The business of discounting has certainly increased to a great degree within a few years, and it were to be wished this increase had been occasioned by the briskness of our trade; but unfortunately, the business of the Royal Exchange has been of late extremely neglected for that of Change-alley; and the credit of the merchant too often stretched to the utmost, to support his engagements in that dark corner; which is the highest injury to trade in general.

The spirit of gaming, though suppressed at the Groom-porter's, has been long encouraged

aged in *Change-alley*, where the sharpers at J—n—n's have overtopt all others of the fraternity of late.— A fellow of this stamp, when admitted of that club, shall have his credit supported until he can make a bold push for twenty thousand at once ; when, if he happens to mistake the point, which is but an even bett at most, he *waddles off in the character of a lame duck*, according to the *cant phrase of the alley*, and leaves the dupes, who trusted to his honesty, to blame their credulity, by which themselves and families are involved in absolute ruin. Such a fellow often quits the alley full-handed, and retires to the other end of the town, where he lives in affluence, and defiance of the law ; whilst the honefter highwayman, sometimes driven by extreme necessity and despair, makes his *exit* at Tyburn for a single guinea.

The merchant, who is in some degree an adventurer, will always be induced to traffic where he expects the greatest profit : He risks his fortune sometimes amongst pirates, in hopes of great gain, and is led to risque it in the alley amongst sharpers on the same account. The expectation of making ten or twelve *per cent.* by a trading voyage, is absorbed in the hopes of making as much or

D

more

more in a few days, by the rise or fall of stocks.

How many merchants of eminence have been already absolutely ruined by this kind of dealing, and how destructive it must be to the trading interest of the nation, let any one consider. Were he to gain a million by this infamous traffick, the kingdom cannot gain a penny by it; whereas if he were to acquire but a thousand by fair trade, the nation would in reality be more than so much a gainer, by adding to its strength, as well as to its stock.

The greatest part of the business of discounting has been occasioned of late by the extraordinary engagements of merchants in that kind of traffick, and it would be a public benefit that there were no possibility of discounting for that purpose; but it cannot well be imagined that such part of this business, as is merely relative to trade, will suffer by the want of a public Bank, when the trade of Holland, which is so very considerable, finds no want of one there for that purpose.

There can be no doubt, however, but the profit arising from the business of discounting, now chiefly ingrossed by the Bank of England, will be properly attended to on
its

its dissolution ; and probably several persons engaged in that Bank, who are well acquainted with the profits, will set up houses particularly for the purpose, as in Holland.

Private bankers will also pay a greater attention to this branch than they do at present, as they will then find their account in it much better than they can hope for, whilst the best bills are carried to the Bank of England. Their notes will be in common currency for smaller sums, and national Bank-notes will answer as well, if not better than specie for large ones. So that on the whole, the merchant will, probably, find his account in having many shops to resort to ; and the discounting business, relative to trade, more readily transacted, and probably on easier terms, than at present.

I am the more inclined to this opinion from what happened in 1758, when the unexpected sudden stop put by the Directors of the Bank to discounting bills of exchange in the usual manner, laid the merchants under extreme difficulties, who always reckoned on a good bill of exchange as so much ready money ; and as the credit, and in a great measure the fortune, of a merchant, depend so absolutely on the punctuality of

his payment, many were greatly distressed by so unforeseen a stop in this branch. Several who subscribed largely to the government-loan, being under a necessity of disposing of part of their subscription at any price that could be had, in order to make their payments regularly; and others, under the common engagements in trade, must have been extremely injured in their credit, though possessed of bills of exchange to a considerable value, were it not for the assistance lent by private bankers on the occasion.

A national Bank will put an entire stop to the business of stockjobbing, and consequently to a great part of the discounting business, by converting the national debt into Bank-notes, the value of which will not be subject to fluctuation. The merchant will then have no opportunity of making an extraordinary profit by lending his money to the government, nor expectation of buying stock at a low price, or trafficking in the alley on speculation, and will of course employ it in trade, in order to turn it to the best advantage.

By this means the commercial interest of the nation will be better attended to; and through this channel only can riches flow into this kingdom; for wealth acquired by
stock

stockjobbing is in reality of no more advantage to the public, than if it were acquired by robbing on the highway.

Whatever is advantageous to the general trade of the kingdom, is equally so to the landed interest; for wherever manufactures flourish, the rent of lands rises accordingly; and in proportion to the riches introduced by trade and commerce, will the value of lands be increased.

The real interest of the state is so intimately connected with the landed and trading interests, that whatever affects one in any degree, must necessarily affect the other. Our immense debt, and number of taxes levied in consequence, are so very injurious to every national interest, that it is become indispensibly necessary to find some means of lightening the burthen.

Borrowing money to supply the expences of the state was originally instituted as a kind of political security for the good behaviour of some, who, perhaps at that time, could only be induced to advance money to the government, on account of the extraordinary profit to be made by it; and partly as a proper emolument to such as were really friends to
the

the Revolution, and willing to assist the state with their purses.

This method of running the nation in debt, and increasing our duties and taxes on the necessaries of life to pay the interest, could not fail being a great damp upon our trade, then beginning to flourish, and looked upon with a jealous eye by the Dutch. The raising money, in this shape^r was, therefore constantly promoted from that quarter, on this account, as well as on account of the profits many individuals of that nation have found otherwise by it.

From this slight beginning, our immense debt has accumulated; and from thence, a kind of stockjobbing interest has sprung up, which was found so useful to ministerial purposes, and so profitable to their dependants, that it seems to have been invariably attended to, as a primary object in all political measures; which as our debt has increased, has still acquired greater influence, until it has, in a great measure, overbalanced the landed and trading interests of the kingdom.

There is a wide distinction between the stockholder, who lends his money to the government with intent to let it remain, and the stockjobber, who seldom holds any
quantity

quantity of stock, though he subscribes very largely to the public loans, and deals for thousands on speculation. The one suffers by any distress of the state, whilst the other thrives by it; for when money is most wanted by the government, every method is taken by the stockjobber to reduce the price of stocks, until the terms of borrowing are settled according to that standard; and then every trick is tried to raise them, in order to sell out to advantage.

The distress of the state is the stockjobber's harvest, which begins with subscription, and he reaps a benefit by every chance of war. A defeat or a victory is turned equally to his advantage, if he can but acquire early intelligence; for he buys, or sells accordingly; no matter whether possessed of any quantity of money or scrip; he bargains for time, and the difference between the prices is all that is required. Thus he veers with every wind, and, if well informed, profits by every change of weather; whilst the real stockholder suffers in the value of his property, by any distress that happens to the government.

The success that has attended many in this kind of business, and the fortunes that have been raised by some, who had no other stock
to

to trade on originally, than impudence, and good intelligence, has induced many, even of very considerable property and high station, to engage deeply in this traffick ; and the contagion seems to have spread so universally of late, that it certainly requires some more effectual remedy to stop it, than has yet been applied.

As the foregoing considerations may probably be sufficient to shew the feasibility of establishing a national Bank on the terms proposed, and the general advantages to be derived from thence, it may be proper in the next place to examine that part of the plan relative to the government and direction of it.

It is proposed that the business of this Bank shall be under the immediate management of twenty-four gentlemen of property in land, who may be considered as Agents under the direction of the House of Commons, in whom the government of the Bank is more particularly placed ; and the whole power over it, vested ultimately in the legislature ; where only it can be allowed to remain with greatest safety to the public.

The Treasury is to have a standing credit with it, as far as 500,000 *l.* without discount,

as

as a kind of equivalent for placing the public revenue there; which is a benefit the bank of England now enjoys in a great measure, though it never advances money on the current supplies without interest, and sometimes compound interest; which is so much loss to the public. The giving such a credit to the Treasury, from whom no danger of its misapplication can well be apprehended whilst under the inspection of the House of Commons, may occasionally be of very considerable advantage to the public.

The Directors of the Bank of England refusing to advance money on the land-tax granted by Parliament for the year 1760, which was a profitable branch they had until that time almost entirely ingrossed, and was therefore unexpected by the government, might have been attended with dangerous consequences, at a time we were engaged in a most expensive war; and although they may have had sufficient motives for acting as they did, which the public was not, nor perhaps is it prudent they should be, acquainted with, yet the nation might have been injured extremely by such an unexpected proceeding.

E

Our

Our constitution certainly leaves every individual the free choice of advancing money to the government, or refusing to do so, when the terms are not agreeable to the lender. Every particular compulsion in this point would, with great reason, be deemed an invasion of the property of the subject: therefore, as it is in the power of the lender to obtrude his own terms on any extraordinary emergency, it would certainly be a benefit to the public, that the government should have such a resource on any urgent occasion, as not to depend entirely on the current supplies, which can come in but gradually, and yet may be immediately necessary to the safety of the nation; or else be obliged to borrow money for the purpose, on very disadvantageous terms.

It is absolutely required that the Directors of this Bank, though but agents under a Committee of the House of Commons, should be possessed of considerable landed property, which is to be unalienable, and answerable for their conduct during their continuance in that trust; which must be allowed a better security than the monied qualification of any Director, whose whole property, be it ever
so

so considerable in that shape, may be transferred to another kingdom in a post-letter.

This is not mentioned as a reflection in any shape on the Directors of the Bank of England, who are men of property, and as much to be depended on as any private set of gentlemen whatsoever, but to point out the difference between the securities required for the Directors of the one, and the other Bank. Yet, at the same time, the extraordinary power acquired by any set of private men over the money and credit of the kingdom, by means of that Bank, may be considered as one motive, amongst many, for placing it in the manner proposed.

As it is expressly stipulated that the whole debt due to the Bank of England, which amounts at present to 11,686,800 *l.* shall be absolutely discharged, and also a year's notice given before the Corporation can be dissolved, there cannot be the least colour of reason for granting a further term whilst that debt subsists. But when it is considered that the saving of one *per cent.* on the redeemable part of our debt amounts to a million a-year, and that this may, with the greatest probability, be effected by a national Bank, which can never be established whilst that Bank

subsists; I say, when this extraordinary public benefit is considered, although it should not be thought proper to carry such a scheme into execution immediately, yet, as it cannot be supposed that any offer the Bank can possibly make will be found in any degree equivalent, it must be presumed, that such a future resource will never be bartered for a temporary convenience.

I do not apprehend there can be any extraordinary difficulty in raising 11,686,800 *l.* to discharge the debt due to the Bank, as the same fund appropriated to pay the interest will answer equally to others. But as every assistance towards the payment of the national debt is so far beneficial to the public, I shall take the liberty of proposing the means, by which a part of the debt due to the Bank may be discharged; and from which, I apprehend, other public advantages might also be derived.

The Forest-lands, when depopulated by William the Conqueror, who shewed a greater regard to the wild beasts of this country, than to his conquered subjects, were, at the time, some of the best cultivated lands in this kingdom. New-forest, in Hampshire, was covered with villages for thirty miles in extent,

extent, and had thirty mother-churches, besides many subordinate ones within that district. Enfield-chace and Epping-forest, as also other forests and chaces at present in a manner useless, would become of very considerable advantage, if properly cultivated.

The only public benefit that could arise from these lands lying waste, was from the timber they produced for the Royal Navy; but the timber, and even the young trees, are now so absolutely destroyed in most places, that no benefit of the kind is to be expected from the greatest part of them. Twenty thousand acres of the best wooded parts of the different forests and chaces, properly inclosed and preserved, would produce much more timber than the whole does at present.

The quantity of acres the several forests and chaces contain, cannot well be estimated with any tolerable degree of precision, as there are no surveys of them, and in respect of which opinions differ widely; some computing them at a million of acres, and others not above half that quantity. Supposing they may contain 400,000 acres, exclusive of what may be deemed sufficient for royal parks and timber, these divided into lots of 100 to 500 acres, and sold at public auction to the
highest

highest bidder, would produce a considerable sum of money towards the discharge of the debt due to the Bank.

I should imagine these lands, including Enfield-chace and Epping-forest, which are so contiguous to London, might sell at 5 s. *per* acre, and twenty years purchase at least, clear of all expences; which would amount to two millions, and be a saving to the public of 60,000 *l. per ann.*; and it is most probable also, that these lands, on cultivation, would soon be worth 10 *l. per* acre, which would produce a land-tax of 40,000 *l. per ann.*; so that in this shape the public would gain 100,000 *l. per ann.* by the sale.

As it is not presumed that this estimate is made with exactness, the value of the lands may be under, or over-rated. Those that are near London would certainly sell at a considerable price, when divided into small lots; but whatever the quantity, or price may be, there can be no doubt but the cultivating so much land, now in a manner useless, must be a very considerable benefit to the public in general, and to London in particular; which has increased so visibly in its buildings, and in the number of horses and carriages, that a
scarcity

scarcity of hay and straw, &c. is very apparent.

Supposing only one twelfth of these lands to be arable, which by proper cultivation may produce five quarters of corn *per* acre on average. The value of this corn, at 15 *l.* *per* quarter, amounts to 124,998 *l.* *per ann.* which, if not wanted for our consumption, would bring so much, or more money into the kingdom by exportation; and if wanted, would save so much money from being sent to foreign markets.

This article, abstracted from the benefit the public would also receive from the remaining 366,000 acres of land being inclosed, and cultivated for meadow, pasture, and garden grounds, is certainly a matter of national importance, and would be of more real advantage to this country, than the acquisition, and cultivation of any foreign province.

The property of these lands has been a long time vested in the Crown, with a right of commonage by custom to the borderers. There are also grants from the Crown of several lodges, with certain lands, and privileges annexed.

It

It is not proposed that any person should be deprived of his right or property in these lands without an equivalent. The part appropriated to each lodge may be let to remain as at present; and the value of commonage, or other privilege any person may claim, left to the determination of a jury, and paid out of the money arising from the sale.

As for numbers of cottagers who have erected huts on the borders of these lands, and support an idle life by letting a few half-starved cattle range for a scanty subsistence in the forests, or by stealing wood, deer, and game, they can have no pretension to redress, but ought rather to be suppressed, as nurseries of villainy and idleness.

If the widening of narrow passages, and opening convenient streets, are sufficient motives for the legislature to oblige persons to quit their habitations, and dispose of their properties at a price fixed by a jury, it may certainly, with much greater reason, be expected, that a law of this nature, which carries a public benefit of so much greater importance along with it, should readily be assented to by parliament.

The consent of his Majesty, as a supreme part of the legislature, and chief proprietor
of

of these lands, is absolutely necessary to the passing a law for this purpose ; and, to his high honour, it cannot even be doubted but he will readily give his consent to any measure that appears for the public good : more especially to a law of this nature ; *for who so fit to redress the ravages of a Tyrant, as a patriot King ?*

It has been a matter of doubt amongst our political calculators, whether the numbers of people in this kingdom had increased for some years before the last war ; but I believe there is no doubt of their decreasing during the time it continued ; and I should imagine will be likely to continue on the decline for some time, by our great acquisition of foreign territory, which will induce many migrations, for the present at least, injurious to this country.

If foreign Protestants were admitted to purchase the forest-lands, with the benefit of naturalization for themselves and families by the purchase of 100 acres ; and the same to every Protestant family that should occupy a part of these lands, or a tenement of 10 *l.* *per ann.* within a limited time, and continue in the same for a certain number of years, it may reasonably be imagined, many would

F

grasp

grasp at such an opportunity; and that opulent families even would chuse to establish themselves in a country, the constitution of which, with respect to liberty and religion, cannot be equalled. Such persons would probably induce many useful hands to come along with them, to assist in cultivating their lands, or establishing useful manufactures on them; to which, a considerable part of these lands being near London, where they might always be certain of the best market, would be an extraordinary encouragement.

By this means, not only the money foreigners might pay for these lands, but probably the whole fortunes of such families, as well as numbers of useful hands, might be acquired.

Whoever reflects on the impolitic conduct of Lewis the Fourteenth, in forcing such numbers of his Protestant subjects to seek an asylum in this kingdom, on account of their religion, may from thence date the rise and progress of several of our most useful and profitable branches of manufacture. By their settling in Spital-fields, then the worst inhabited part of the suburbs, it is become, in little more than half a century, as opulent and populous as most other parts of the town;
and

and the descendants of these industrious people are as strongly attached to our constitution as any men in the kingdom.

By selling the forest-lands in the manner proposed, there will be an acquisition of 100,000 *l. per ann.* to the public revenue, which with the produce of a national Bank, added to the Sinking Fund, generally estimated two millions *per ann.* are to be applied to the discharge of the national debt.

The Sinking Fund cannot well be estimated at more than two millions *per ann.* tho' it may have exceeded somewhat of late; with this addition it would amount to 3,100,000 *l. per ann.* which faithfully applied with its increase, would in 21 and a half years absolutely discharge 100 millions of our debt, and in 28 years and a half the whole 140 millions.

The usual supplies in time of peace, have been a land-tax of 2 *s.* in the pound, with the malt-tax, amounting, in the whole, to but 1,750,000 *l. per ann.* which have not been found sufficient to answer the current expences for many years past; and will be less so, as our large acquisition of foreign territory must necessarily increase the expence for some time to come.

This deficiency has been usually supplied out of the Sinking Fund, which is one reason perhaps why so inconsiderable a part of our national debt has yet been discharged by it, notwithstanding the many years of peace that have ensued its establishment; so that if some effectual means are not taken to provide for the current expences in time of peace, without encroaching on this fund, the prospect of ever discharging our immense debt must vanish entirely.

In order to preserve this fund entire, and apply it sacredly to the original purpose it was intended for; I shall venture to add to the foregoing measures that of an equal land-tax, and the abolition of taxes on the necessaries of life.

It happens unluckily, that a measure of this kind seemingly clashes with the interest of the landed gentlemen, who are of greatest weight and authority, and by whose influence only a law of this nature can be established. I say, seemingly clashes; for when thoroughly considered, I imagine it must evidently appear, that they would receive the greatest benefit from thence, as it is most certain, that all taxes on the necessaries of life, in whatever manner levied, or however remote

mote in appearance, are paid in the end by persons of fortune only.

To bring this however to a nearer view, it may be proper to lay down some estimate of the present state of the land-tax, and those taxes on the necessaries of life proposed to be abolished.

It is generally allowed, that the land-tax, on a medium, does not produce one half of what it would by an equal assessment. Some few may perhaps pay to the full amount, whilst the majority by much do not pay one half, and many not above one fourth; which certainly should never be admitted in a state, where the liberty and property of every individual is protected and maintained at a general expence; towards which every person should be obliged to contribute in proportion to his property, and that levied in the most fair and equal manner.

Smuggling of every kind should certainly be prevented, as far as is consistent with the nature of our constitution. He who originally gave in a false return of the yearly value of his estate, in order to evade his just proportion of the land-tax, was in reality as much a smuggler, as he who run his goods
to

to avoid the duty, or excise paid by the fair trader.

The property of many such estates may have passed through different hands since that time; and probably a higher purchase has been paid on account of the land-tax being fixed at an under-rate; yet, surely, it can never be deemed a sufficient reason, why that, which at the beginning was absolutely fraudulent, should be suffered to remain for ever in the same state, when so apparently injurious to those who pay a full proportion towards the support of government, by which the property of every individual is equally protected.

But admitting the plea of having purchased an estate at an extraordinary price, on account of the land-tax being under-rated, to be sufficient; if it is demonstrable that such a person would be a considerable gainer by paying that tax to the full, and abolishing other taxes for which he now pays double the amount of the difference between an equal, and unequal assessment, it seems reasonable to imagine, such a person would naturally approve an alteration of the kind, although his neighbour, who is higher rated, should still be a more considerable gainer.

There

There is no proposition more evident, than that every tradesman, handicraftsman, labourer, or any other person who subsists merely by the profits of trade or labour, must necessarily advance the price of the commodities he deals in, or the wages he earns, in proportion to every tax he is obliged to pay, or he cannot possibly maintain himself.

This price must be still further advanced on account of every other tradesman's taxes he is obliged to deal with for the common necessities of life. So that when a person of fortune pays any tradesman's bill, he not only pays a proportion of his taxes on window lights, coals, candles, soap, salt, leather, &c. &c. but also a further proportion of the same taxes, on account of every other person such tradesman deals with for necessities.

For instance, the taylor is obliged to pay an advanced price for meat, on account of the butcher's taxes; and a further advance on account of the taxes paid by the several tradesmen the butcher deals with for necessities, which he must charge on his meat, as it is the only article he deals in. He also pays the like advances, on the same account, to the baker, shoemaker, and every other tradesman

tradesman he deals with for articles necessary, either for subsistence, or carrying on his trade; all which advances he must add to his own taxes, and charge the whole on the cloaths he makes.

As the taylor is obliged in this manner to advance the price of cloaths, the shoemaker must advance the price of shoes on the same account, and add a further advance on account of the dearness of cloaths.—The tallow-chandler advances the price of candles on account of his own taxes, and several further advances are made on account of the dearness of cloaths, shoes, &c. &c. &c. all which are absolutely necessary for subsistence, and advanced in their prices on account of these taxes. So that each alternately lays the several advances on the commodity he deals in, or adds to the price of his labour, until the whole comes to the person of property, who deals in nothing, and consequently cannot shift the burthen further.

Thus it appears evidently that the person of property, who lives merely on his income, pays not only all the different taxes on the necessaries of life, but also the several advances on account of the different tradesmen affected by them, at last.

It

It may appear surprizing to those who have not considered the consequences of laying taxes on necessary articles, should it be asserted that they are paid sometimes five hundred, and sometimes even a thousand-fold by the consumer ; and yet it is often the case, though little attended to.

For instance, a pane of glass that does not weigh a pound, which cost but a shilling before the last tax of a penny a pound was laid on glass, was immediately advanced to the price of eighteen pence, which is 600 *per cent.* advance on account of this tax. The shoemaker has in like manner advanced the price of a pair of shoes that do not weigh above a pound, 2 *s.* extraordinary, on account of a tax of two pence a pound upon leather, which is above 1000 *per cent.* advance on account of that tax. The whole of which extraordinary advance, with several other advances on account of the different tradesmen, and labourers necessarily affected, must be paid in the end by persons of fortune only. How much more advantageous for such persons, to lay the amount of these taxes in an equal manner on their income, in the first instance, may be easily determined by any

one who takes the trouble of considering this matter.

It would be endless to examine the several advances on each tax; but although, on a moderate computation, the whole of the advances, paid at last, on account of taxes on necessaries, by persons of property who live merely on their income, whether it proceeds from land or money, may be rated at 100 *per cent.*; yet to leave as little room as possible for any objection, on this account, to the following calculations, I shall estimate the several advances on the taxes on necessaries in general, at 50 *per cent.* only.

The annual income of this kingdom, proceeding from lands, houses, mortgages, judgments, places, and pensions, cannot well be estimated at less than 30 millions *per ann.* and as our taxes on necessaries are laid chiefly to pay the interest of our national debt, which at present is 140 millions, it is become in reality as much a mortgage on this income, as if each person of property had subjected his estate to a proportion of the debt; with this material difference, that he pays above double interest by the manner in which these taxes are levied. So that the national debt, considered in this light, is equal to a mortgage

mortgage of 4650 *l.* on every 1000 *l.* *per ann.*

The several duties, excises, and other taxes appropriated to pay the interest of this debt, and also to establish a fund of two millions *per ann.* to be applied towards its discharge, with the civil list revenue 800,000 *l.* *per ann.* amount to about 7,400,000 *l.* *per ann.*

The expence of collecting the several taxes may be rated at 10 *per cent.* at the lowest, and the advanced prices paid at last by persons of property, according to the foregoing estimate, cannot be rated at less than 50 *per cent.* from whence it is evident that no less than 12,210,000 *l.* *per ann.* are levied in reality on the general income, on account of 7,400,000 *l.* *per ann.* paid into the Exchequer; which is above 40 *per cent.* on the whole; whereas if this 7,400,000 *l.* were levied on the general income by an equal assessment in the first instance, it would not amount to one half as much as is now paid.

Amongst the many grievances that attend the multiplicity of our taxes, there are none generally more obnoxious, than those proceeding from excise laws.

The original excise granted to Car. II. in lieu of the Courts of Wards and Liveries,

then part of the civil list establishment, and the sole property of the Crown, was certainly an advantageous bargain for the public : but the power of the commissioners and under officers of excise, with the arbitrary manner of determining disputes relative to that branch, in a different manner from what is customary in other matters, however well adapted for collecting the revenue in the most complete manner, and at the lowest expence, must be very disagreeable in a country of liberty. Yet as the grievances of an excise, were not more obnoxious than those proceeding from the Courts of Wards and Liveries, and their abolition, on the whole, purchased at a price then deemed considerably below the value, it is not surprizing they were submitted to : but it must appear very extraordinary, that the several extensions of excise laws since the Revolution, for the payment of the interest of money advanced at an exorbitant premium, should have been admitted at a time the liberty of the subject was in all other respects better established than it had ever been before.

After laying down this short state of the original, and progress of the excise, I shall submit it to the impartial, how far an excise properly

properly modelled, or, in other words, a constitutional excise, might become a general advantage.

I imagine the principal objection to excise laws are, first, that they subject the fair trader to the frequent and arbitrary visitation of officers, and the judicial determination of commissioners during pleasure. And secondly, that they necessarily increase the number, and power of such officers; which are inconsistent with the principles of our constitution.

As to the first objection, I should imagine excise laws might be made as constitutional as any other, by having all disputes relative to them tried, in the first instance, before our judges, or justices of assize; and all matters of fact determinable by a jury, as in other suits relative to property; and that the arbitrary visitation of officers, might easily be regulated in such a manner, as to be no ways obnoxious to the fair trader; so that, on the whole, the liberty, and property of the subject, might be as firmly maintained under these, as any other laws of the realm.

The second objection must be obviated entirely by the following measures; by which it is presumed, that although a general excise were to be established, the quantity of the
sum

sum to be levied under excise laws would be considerably less, than it is at present, as well as the number of articles excised ; and yet in the whole, the present revenue would be greater than it is at present, and levied with much greater certainty to the government, and much greater ease to the subject.

The difficulties merchants lie under from a multiplicity of custom-house duties, and officers, and the delays necessarily attending the present method of custom-house entries, besides the heaviness of the duties on many articles to be paid immediately on importation, often without a prospect of disposing of them soon to advantage, and the trouble and expence attending the drawback, if for want of a proper market here, they should be sent to another country ; must undoubtedly be very great impediments to our commerce.

If the several commodities, now subject to duties, or customs, were reduced to proper rates, payable only when sold by the retailer to the consumer ; the importer, the wholesale merchant, and the retailer, might afford to sell them at a lower price, and make a greater profit on each of their capitals ; and yet the consumer might buy the same commodities

modities considerably cheaper than he can at present.

To state this matter more clearly, I will suppose the first cost of imported goods, including freight, &c. to be 100 *l.* and that 100 *l.* more has been paid for duties, &c. on landing. The importer sells these goods to the wholesale merchant for 210 *l.* by which he makes 5 *per cent.* on his capital. The wholesale dealer sells them to the retailer for 220 *l.* 10 *s.* by which he makes 5 *per cent.* profit on his capital; and the retailer sells them to the consumer for 231 *l.* 10 *s.* 6 *d.* by which he also makes 5 *per cent.* on his capital.

If the importer pays no duty, and sells the same goods to the wholesale dealer for 106 *l.* he gains a profit of 6 *per cent.* on his capital; the wholesale dealer, by selling them to the retailer for 112 *l.* 7 *s.* makes as much on his capital; the retailer also who sells them to several consumers for 219 *l.* in which is included 100 *l.* excise, instead of 100 *l.* duties, makes 6 *per cent.* on his capital; and the consumer saves at the same time 6 *per cent.* on the quantity he buys. By which it is evident, that although the several traders make an additional profit on their capitals, the

the consumer saves 6 *per cent.* by the alteration; and yet the government receives the full amount of the duty, and at less expence considerably; as it does not cost one half as much to collect the excise revenue, as it does to receive the duties and customs; and on the whole, must be a considerable advantage to the fair trader, as well as to the public; by destroying the smuggling-business absolutely, which would soon be the case.

Were this carried further, it would also appear, that by changing the duties, and customs on many articles into an excise, particularly such as are necessary to our manufactures, the people of property must be considerable gainers; on account of the many different hands these articles pass through, before they come to the consumer; each of whom could afford to sell more reasonably, and yet with as much, or more profit, than before.

Another very important advantage must result from thence, with respect to navigation; for the merchant would then import more freely, or he could not employ so great a capital in trade, as at present; and whenever any commodity was to be had cheaper than ordinary in another country, if not perishable

able, he would, most probably, be induced to bring it here, when no duty was to be paid on importation, and let it remain, until he could find a proper occasion of exporting it to advantage. By which, to all appearance, this kingdom would become in time a general repository for merchandize; and consequently the quantity of our shipping, and number of our sailors, must increase accordingly.

I have ventured thus far, to offer such reasons as occur to me in favour of a general excise, though at present a very unpopular topic; and formerly opposed by some of the greatest men this nation has produced. But I am satisfied, that, at the time the most spirited opposition to excise-measures so universally prevailed, it was not under consideration, whether a constitutional excise could be established with advantage to the public; but rather, whether a ministerial extension of excise laws, unconstitutionally formed, should prevail against the public interest.— And, as what has been advanced on this head, is intended merely for the benefit of the public, without the least view to party, or persons, I cannot doubt, however I may be mis-

H

taken

taken in my judgment of the matter, but it will meet that indulgence from the candid, which every attempt of this nature is in some degree entitled to.

It appears by the preceding estimates, that an equal assessment on the general income of the kingdom, instead of the present taxes on necessaries, would but be greatly advantageous to persons of fortune, as well as to the public. And as it seems very reasonable to imagine, that a constitutional excise might be formed equally beneficial; it may be worth examining how far both united might operate most effectually to the general benefit of the nation.

The several duties and taxes now levied on account of our National Debt, Civil List, and Sinking Fund, amount to about 7,400,000*l.* *per ann.* two thirds of which are already placed under excise-laws. If one half of these taxes, including particularly those on the necessaries of life and manufactures, were entirely abolished, and the same sum levied by an equal assessment on the general income of the kingdom, it would not amount to 2*s.* 6*d.* in the pound; which is not near one half as much as is now paid by persons of property on account of these taxes.

If the other moiety, including taxes on luxury chiefly, and duties on articles least detrimental to trade and manufactures, were placed under a general excise, constitutionally adapted, it seems evident to demonstration, that the quantity of the sum to be levied under an excise, would be less than it is at present; besides the advantage of having all matters relative to this branch, determinable, as other matters, concerning property, usually are.

A moiety of these taxes, to the certain amount of 3,700,000 *l. per ann.* levied under a general constitutional excise, with an equal assessment of 2 *s.* 6 *d.* in the pound, which will produce 3,750,000 *l. per ann.*; in the whole 7,450,000 *l. per ann.* will answer fully the interest of our National Debt, the Civil List, and a Sinking Fund of two millions *per ann.* certain.

A further equal assessment of one shilling in the pound, with the malt-tax 750,000 *l.* in all 2,250,000 *l. per ann.* will probably be sufficient to answer the current expences of government in time of peace, without encroaching on the Sinking Fund, which certainly ought never to be admitted at any rate.

If the malt-tax were to be dropt entirely, which would undoubtedly be a most considerable benefit to the landed interest, as well as to our trade and manufactures in general, by lowering the price of beer, which is so very necessary an article to the lower class of people; an equal assessment of 6*d*. in the pound would answer equally.

Thus it appears evidently upon the whole, that an equal assessment of four shillings in the pound on the general income, in the first instance, would produce a greater, and more certain revenue, than the several taxes on the necessaries of life and manufactures, to the amount of 4,450,000*l. per ann.* for which persons of property pay, in reality, above six shillings in the pound at present; besides the unequal land-tax of four shillings in the pound now paid.

It may perhaps be objected, that although the taxes on necessaries should be abolished entirely, the price of commodities might not be lowered in proportion; as tradesmen, in general, endeavour to keep up the prices of their goods as long as they can. But there are numbers of young tradesmen in all branches, and many older ones that have not a great deal of business, who will always endeavour,

deavour, and can only expect to increase it, by selling at a reasonable profit; so that the more established ones must sell at as low prices, or else lose their customers; who will certainly buy as cheap as they can, when the goodness of the commodity is equal.

In some branches, perhaps, that are more confined, the present prices might be continued for a while, by combinations; but in general, there will always be a sufficient number of tradesmen in most branches, who will be content with moderate gain; especially when it will be a means also of increasing their business, and consequently their profit; for it is most certain, that by abolishing the taxes on the necessaries of life and manufactures, they will be able to sell a great deal lower than they can possibly do at present, and yet with equal, if not greater profit.

The general advantages that must result from the abolition of our taxes on necessaries, would be infinite to this nation; for although our war is over for the present, we are still to deal with an industrious people, who will always be ready to vie with us in the arts of peace, and will certainly endeavour to beat us out of foreign markets, by underselling us; which they may probably effect with greater security

security, than they could stand before us in the field of battle.

The reduction of our taxes on necessaries are the only possible means of avoiding an evil of this nature, which would be much more fatal to us than the loss of half a dozen battles in Germany. Our artificers will then be enabled to work at moderate wages ; our merchants to export with certain profit ; and our manufactures will find a certain vent at foreign markets, when they can be afforded at more reasonable prices than theirs.

By such means only, can our commerce long continue in a flourishing state ; and by an extensive and flourishing commerce only, can a formidable maritime power be properly supported ; without which, this nation cannot be maintained in its freedom and independency ; or ever rise to that splendor and affluence to which a free and independent people may rationally aspire. Yet there are many people so strangely prejudiced against any kind of innovation, that although they must plainly see the excessive injury to our manufactures, by a multiplicity of taxes on necessaries ; and the imminent danger of sinking under an accumulated load of debt ; yet they cannot be persuaded to adopt new measures,

measures, however salutary; or even to quit the pernicious, beaten road of borrowing, which leads to certain ruin in the end.

In order to place the several preceding measures in a clear light, I shall lay the estimates relative to an equal assessment, and constitutional excise, with the profits to arise from a national parliamentary Bank, and the sale of the forest-lands, under one view.

Instead of the several duties, and excises on the necessary articles of life, or manufactures, to the amount of 4,450,000l. per annum, to be abolished; and also the present land-tax of 4 s. in the pound; it is proposed, that an equal assessment of 4s. in the pound be levied on the general income of the kingdom, which is estimated at 30 millions per annum; the produce of which amounts to		per ann. £. 6,000,000
The several duties, and taxes on luxury, and such articles as may be deemed least injurious to our trade and manufactures; to be levied under a general, constitutional excise; to the certain amount of		£. 3,700,000
In the whole,		£. 9,700,000
From which are to be deducted,		
Interest of 140 millions debt, computed at	per ann. £. 4,600,000	} £. 7,600,000
Civil List,	800,000	
Current expences of the government in times of peace,	2,200,000	
Remains a fund for payment of the national debt,		£. 2,100,000
To which are to be added,		
The saving of 1 per cent. on the redeemable part of our debt, by a national parliamentary Bank, estimated at		1,000,000
The produce of the forest-lands, by paying of 2 millions of the debt due to the Bank of England, at 3 per cent.		60,000
Total fund for payment of the national debt,		£. 3,160,000
		To

To which fund, the interest of such sums as shall be annually discharged by it, in time of peace, are to be constantly added, and faithfully applied in the same manner; which in seven years will amount to 3,928,000 *l. per ann.* and in eleven years to 4,365,000 *l. per ann.* In 21 years it will discharge 100 millions of our national debt, and in twenty-seven years and three quarters, it will absolutely discharge the whole debt of 140 millions.

The general income of the kingdom, upon which this calculation depends in a great measure, is estimated at 30 millions *per ann.* which, I believe, is as low as it can well be taken. But if, on trial, it were found to fall short, some of the least burthenfome taxes, to the amount of the deficiency, might be let to subsist under a constitutional excise. Or if it should exceed, which on a thorough examination, and proper measures in levying, would more probably be the case, the assessment might be reduced in proportion, so as the equal assessment, and general excise might produce the proposed revenue certain.

In order to tax the mortgages, and judgments in the manner proposed, it may be necessary to have a public Register, as in Middlesex and Yorkshire; or a general one, as

in

in Ireland ; which should be made as little expensive as possible, as well to those who register, as those who want to search ; which would certainly be a great benefit to the landed men of other counties, who could then borrow money at as cheap a rate as in Middlesex or Yorkshire ; and also to the lender and purchaser, by having their titles and debts well secured.

It will also be necessary to lay an adequate penalty on all persons who shall give in a false return of the rents of their lands, or houses, &c. and as the present method of assessing the land-tax, by commissioners who rate themselves and their neighbours, will, probably, never answer the end proposed ; it may be necessary to appoint assessors under the Crown, with a right of appeal to the assize, to be finally determined by a jury ; from which method no partiality either to the Crown or the Public can be apprehended ; as the annual exceeding of an equal assessment, is to be applied towards an abatement of that tax only ; and any deficiency made good, by increasing it.

The only uncertain part of the foregoing estimates, will then be the amount of the saving by a national Bank. But I should
I imagine,

imagine, if the whole of this plan were carried into execution, that part could not fail answering the intended purpose. The presumption, at least, is as well founded as can possibly be required in any speculative matter.

It is proposed that this fund of 3,160,000*l.* *per ann.* shall be applied, in time of war, to the extraordinary expences; which with the current revenue appropriated to the expences of government in time of peace, will amount to 5,260,000*l.* *per ann.* and in seven years to upwards of six millions *per ann.*; which with *proper Oeconomy*, however unfashionable the term may be at present, will be found sufficient to defray the expences of any war this kingdom ought to engage in.

It is to be considered that six millions ready money, is equal to 7,800,000 borrowed at 30 *per cent.* discount; which has been paid by the government, and may probably be higher in a future war, if the system of borrowing is continued: for *borrowers in distress* are always obliged to keep up an interest with the *money-jobbers*; who can only be engaged by *extraordinary profit*; and must therefore be suffered to find their account sufficiently in

in *jobs, contracts, and subscriptions*, in order to secure them thoroughly, if possible.

This sum, with all these advantages, may possibly be deemed insufficient by those who judge only from the expences of the late war; which were indeed extravagant in the highest degree. But its sufficiency will appear more evidently from the annexed account; in which the annual supplies granted by parliament, for the support of every war we have been engaged in since the Revolution, are particularly laid down. From whence it appears, that in King William's wars which began in 1693, and continued for five years, the annual supplies, one year with another, did not amount to more than 5,105,505 *l.*—In Queen Anne's wars, which commenced in 1702, and continued for eleven years, to 5,869,621 *l. per ann.*—In King George the Second's war, which commenced in 1740, and continued for eight years, in which time our foreign subsidies amounted to a million *per ann.* it advanced to 6,691,012 *l. per ann.*—And in the last war, which commenced in 1756, and continued for seven years, to 13,229,376 *l. per ann.*

An examination of particulars is foreign to this estimate, further than to demonstrate

that the sum proposed would be sufficient to answer the expences of any war we ought to engage in. King William maintained 87,000 land forces, and 40,000 sailors; and although we were deemed the Quixotes of the grand alliance in Queen Anne's war, and towards the latter end, in a manner singly, maintained the several wars in Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Flanders, it did not cost us five millions and a quarter *per ann.*; yet many then exclaimed against the extravagance of the expence. But as an unmanaged horse, at first impatient of the slightest burthen, by use receives the pack-horse load, and drudges on contented; we come at last to suffer an additional burthen *of fourteen or fifteen millions to be laid on in one year*, with more unconcern than the first debt of *ten millions, contracted in a five years war.*

Such are generally the pernicious consequences of running in debt, which must be fatal in the next war, unless timely provided against. Our enemies are but too well acquainted with our situation, and will ever expect to sink us by additional weight, until they see our finances established on such a basis, as may enable us to support the expences of future war without borrowing.

War

War is, at present, reduced to a kind of system, which depends as much on the purse as the sword ; and that nation, whose finances hold out longest, will probably prevail in the end : not so much, perhaps, by its strength or valour, as from the inability of its enemy to support the expence.

By the measures that are proposed, our revenue will be established on such a basis, as our enemies can never hope to shake ; as they must perceive, from the number of our taxes abolished, to the amount of 4,450,000 *l. per ann.* the vast resources we should have to apply to, by a temporary tax, in case the exigences of war should, on any extraordinary emergency, oblige us to exceed the fund appointed to support the expences : which will ever be a more certain means of preventing a war, than any treaty that can be devised by the most skilful negociator.

Were it not for our extraordinary success in the late war, it may reasonably be doubted, whether we could possibly have borrowed the immense sums we did ; for, even with all our successes, our funds were reduced from 103, which was the current value of our 3 *per Cents* before the war broke out, to 63 before it was ended. So that we must probably

bably have been obliged to borrow money at 40 *per Cent.* discount, or more, if the war had continued another year; and if we had been in any degree unsuccessful, there is great reason to doubt, whether we could possibly have raised such sums at any rate.

The failure of public credit in France, was the cause of very considerable sums being remitted here from Holland to be placed in our funds. The Dutch, who had suffered by the failure of French credit, were inclined to make the most of our distresses, when they could no longer deal safely with our enemies. But however advantageous the failure of French credit might have been to us at that juncture, it may probably be productive of the worst consequences to this nation hereafter, by forcing them to do by necessity, what every wise nation should do by choice; that is, to search for the means of supporting the expences of war without borrowing. And they may possibly find many resources, which nothing but necessity could oblige a volatile nation to examine strictly into.

Common prudence — I may add, the future safety and welfare of this nation, should lead us to the same point that necessity obliges them; as it is evident to the meanest capacity,

capacity, that if they can ever find the means of supporting a war without running in debt, whilst we continue the same ruinous course we have so long and obstinately pursued, we must inevitably sink under the burthen, let our successes be ever so great.

An Account of the Annual Supplies that have been granted by Parliament to support the several Wars that have been carried on since the Revolution.

King WILLIAM.

Annual Supply.	Sum Total.	Medium per Ann.
1693 — £ 4,017,079	£ 25,527,527	£ 5,105,505
1694 — 5,539,087		
1695 — 5,036,430		
1696 — 5,539,853		
1697 — 5,395,078		

Queen ANNE.

1702 — £ 3,551,459	£ 59,065,834	£ 5,369,521
1703 — 3,535,457		
1704 — 4,005,369		
1705 — 4,570,488		
1706 — 5,075,761		
1707 — 5,942,381		
1708 — 5,926,849		
1709 — 6,563,138		
1710 — 6,425,268		
1711 — 6,789,169		
1712 — 6,680,495		

King

King GEORGE II.

Annual Supply.	Sum Total.	Medium per Annum.
1740 — £ 3,874,076	£ 59,859,119	£ 6,651,013
1741 — 5,006,039		
1742 — 5,723,537		
1743 — 5,912,383		
1744 — 6,243,538		
1745 — 6,562,902		
1746 — 7,088,354		
1747 — 9,389,196		
1748 — 10,059,094		

King GEORGE II. and III.

1756 — £ 7,229,117	£ 92,605,376	£ 13,229,376
1757 — 8,350,320		
1758 — 10,486,457		
1759 — 12,761,310		
1760 — 15,503,563		
1761 — 19,619,119		
1762 — 18,655,750		

F I N I S.

